

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. In the context of one or more electronic appliances incorporating one or more restricted functions in addition to one or more standard functions, a method for releasing at least one restriction of at least one of the restricted function or functions, the electronic appliance function restriction release method being characterized in that it comprises one or more function restriction release program execution steps wherein one or more function restriction release programs capable of releasing at least one restriction of at least one of the restricted function or functions is caused to be executed on one or more host computers;
one or more communication steps wherein communication is carried out between or among at least one of the host computer or computers and at least one of the electronic appliance or appliances at one or more times when at least one of the host computer or computers is connected to at least one of the electronic appliance or appliances; and
one or more function restriction release steps wherein at least one restriction of at least one of the restricted function or functions at at least one of the electronic appliance or appliances is released.
2. An electronic appliance function restriction release method according to claim 1 characterized in that the electronic appliance function restriction release method further comprises
one or more identification steps wherein at least one host computer that has carried out at least a portion of the electronic appliance function restriction release processing is identified; and
one or more function enabling steps wherein at least one function subject to function restriction release is enabled for only at least one of the host computer or computers identified at at least one of the identification step or steps as having carried out at least a portion of the electronic appliance function restriction release processing.
3. An electronic appliance function restriction release method according to claim 1 or 2 characterized in that the electronic appliance function restriction release method further comprises

one or more function restriction status determination steps wherein, in the event that one or more drivers capable of controlling at least one of the electronic appliance or appliances is or are installed on at least one of the host computer or computers, at least one status of at least one restricted function of at least one of the electronic appliance or appliances is determined when at least one of the host computer or computers is connected to at least one of the electronic appliance or appliances;

one or more driver enabling steps wherein, in the event that one or more function restrictions has or have been released, at least one driver for at least one of the restricted function or functions is enabled; and

one or more driver disabling steps wherein, in the event that one or more function restrictions has or have not been released, at least one driver for at least one of the restricted function or functions is disabled.

4. An electronic appliance incorporating one or more restricted functions in addition to one or more standard functions, the electronic appliance being characterized in that it is equipped with

one or more controllers capable, when release information for release of one or more function restrictions is sent thereto from one or more host apparatuses, of causing at least one restriction of at least one of the restricted function or functions to be released based on at least a portion of the release information.

5. An electronic appliance according to claim 4, the electronic appliance being characterized in that it is constructed such that

information associated with at least one of the host apparatus or apparatuses from which at least a portion of the function restriction release information was sent is registered at one or more storage units, and at least one of the function or functions subject to function restriction release is enabled for only at least one of the registered host apparatus or apparatuses.